

# **Influence of Environment on Children's Language Acquisition**

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**Inspiring Excellence**

**BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh**

**Influence of Environment on Children's Language Acquisition**

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**of**

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**by**

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**of**

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**April 2016**

## **Dedication**

This paper is dedicated to my respected parents, who have been there always when I need their support, cooperation and affection. I am truly grateful to them for filling my life journey with their precious love and care.

## **Abstract**

The research compares the language development of children of similar age becomes dissimilar in different environment in Bangladesh. The researcher observed four children from different backgrounds (home, daycare, working parents and stay-at-home parents etc.) to find out their variation in case of language acquisition and development. Qualitative method of analysis was employed to analyse the data collected from interview of parents and caregivers, observations and video recordings. The results suggest that interaction with peers and adults facilitate the child with advanced learning and fine development. Findings also suggest that environment has a great impact on the child's acquisition intensity and development level. Furthermore, some recommendations are presented at the end of the research.

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the presentation of my original research work. The contributions of other sources and information have been acknowledged with proper due references. This paper has not been presented anywhere, either in a part or a whole, for a degree or an award, in this or any other University.

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## **Abstract**

The research compares the language development of children of similar age becomes dissimilar in different environment in Bangladesh. The researcher observed four children from different backgrounds (home, daycare, working parents and stay-at-home parents etc.) to find out their variations in case of language acquisition and development. Qualitative method of analysis was employed to analyse the data collected from interview of parents and caregivers, observations and video recordings. The results suggest that interaction with peers and adults facilitate the child with advanced learning and fine development. Findings also suggest that environment has a great impact on the child's acquisition intensity and development level. Furthermore, some recommendations are presented at the end of the research.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Introduction:**

Language is the way to communicate with the world. It is an integral part of an individual. According to Siegler (2000), Piaget stated “development” to be “the active construction of knowledge” and “learning” as “the passive formation of associations” (as cited in Woolfolk, 2008, p. 61). Woolfolk (2008) mentions about Vygotsky’s view that learning drags development to superior level and more sophisticated thinking and interaction plays a significant role in cognitive development (p. 61). Learning is autonomous. The development of language is one of the individual’s most excellent accomplishments. Learning and development of language require some factors so that learning and development become a part of the habit. Children are the most delicate creatures of the world. They are completely different from each other. When it comes their turn to learn and develop, it is quite complex and also time consuming. There are several factors which have strong effect on language acquisition and development. There are also many theories and hypothesis about this phenomena. In short, it has always been complicated to answer the question that how a child can learn his/her first language naturally and effectively. It is also necessary to answer if environment is the main factor or not. If it is the main factor then to what extent it can facilitate the acquisition process. There are also some factors which effects language development process. As we know that children are unpredictable and different, they have some similarities too. By observing their characteristics, similarities, differences, it is possible to affirm about the role of environment, input and interaction. The present study attempts to find out to what extent environment is responsible for language acquisition and the quality of input and interaction is necessary for language development.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Behaviorist approach and role of environment:**

Language learning is a process related to human beings and their overall environment. Different theories and hypothesis have been used to describe the process and many of them are quite successful too. Behaviorism theory is one of them. According to DEMIREZEN (1988), behaviorism is a psychological theory which associates and analyses the interaction, imitation, stimulus-response etc and through a trial and error process, it ends up when humans masters the language (p. 136). The term "Behaviorism" became popular in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in America and J B Watson was the person who coined it (p. 135). The main concept of this theory is that habit establishment leads to all types of learning (p. 136).

Behaviorist theory is mainly about spoken language. The theory is a psychological theory of learning verbal behavior and as we know that spoken language is a part of verbal behavior. It emphasizes on the acquisition of first and second language through the process of stimulus-response and conditioning (p. 137).

In Islam (2013), "Classical behaviorism" and "Neo behaviorism" by Watson and Skinner respectively have been mentioned. "Classical behaviorism" is about stimulus which believes that large quantity of stimulus produces large number of responses and with the time it becomes a part of habit. On the other hand, "Neo behaviorism" does not focus on stimulus because they can be random rather it focuses on the responses and believes responses can be controlled by positive and negative reinforcements (p. 500). Language learning is said to be similar as other habits are

formed, “habit formation” and developed through “imitation” and is termed to be a process where environment and feedback are equally important as stimulus and response (p. 501). In case of language teaching, the theory also helps to teach grammatical and phonological aspects. However, creativity has no room in this theory and imitation cannot be the only tool to learn a language, is the claim of different linguists (p. 502).

In Tomic (1993), behaviorism is said to be observable and not abstract theory like mentalist theory or innatism. It is also mentioned that research should be done on the observable behaviors, not on the unobserved phenomena of consciousness because linguistics is the scientific study of language and science does not believe in anything which is not palpable. This is because theories are recognized completely on observable data (p. 39). Behaviorism is termed to be a “habit” or a “thought” more than a “system” or a “school” because it has no rules with precise ideology. It is said to be “a way of approaching an object of study” and also a “methodology” of learning (p. 40). Moreover, De la Mettrie (1978) has said that, behavior is entirely shaped by positive and negative reinforcement (as cited in Tomic, 1993, p. 40). As we know, language is the most useful human behavior. Therefore, it can be shaped by positive and negative reinforcement.

He (2010) says about the role of behaviorism in vocabulary learning. According to He (2010), learner gets input from the environment and the quality and quantity of input leads to form habit. Repeatedly pronounced words attach into learner's mind and thus the habit turns into acquisition (p. 16). Repetition leads the vocabularies to set up in mind and thus the vocabularies become a part of active vocabularies and helps in production.

Ornat & Gallo (2004) have stated that imitation is the first step of learning and is necessary element of learning a language, though the rate of learning cannot be assumed from the rate of imitation (p. 20). Children learn language first by imitating their near ones. Thus, their learning process goes on.

Cruttenden (1985) puts more importance on the influence of environment and counter the notion of innate ability completely (p. 97). He says, classical conditioning can help to comprehend the meaning of language in humans. He mentioned the example of a mother calling her child naughty while giving punishment and thus the child learns the word and its meaning. He also stated that operant conditioning makes the original behavior to be repeated and the effect of the behavior is responsible for the repetition. He also mentioned two terms “stimulus generalization” and “stimulus discrimination” which are the two stages through the children learn language properly (p. 98).

Sundberg (1996) states that at the age of around 4 to 6 months, children start babbling of the phonemes of their parents' language (p. 21). Besides, it is also mentioned that the rate of vocal behaviour can be increased if followed by reinforcement and increase the chances that those verbal behaviors get further reinforcement by parents or caretakers (p. 22). There are two types of reinforcement- direct and automatic reinforcement. Rheingold, Gewirtz, Ross (1959) say, direct reinforcement is provided by another person and it is easily detectable (as cited in Sundberg, 1996, p. 22). On the other hand, Skinner (1957) mentions automatic reinforcement which is provided without any direct consequential mediation (as cited in Sundberg, 1996, p.22).

Tripp (1991) mentions a game and in the game the children imitated greetings, opening moves of conversations through repetitive activities as they had to do it. They found it easier to follow same formulas used by others and repeated those (p. 88).

To define overgeneralization, Ambridge, Pine, Rowland, Chang and Bidgood (2013) said, "The earliest overgeneralization errors occur when a child extends a particular word to other referents that share some visual or conceptual similarity." (p. 48). Among the three levels of overgeneralizations, lexical level is the most common for children. In studies, it has been found that such overgeneralizations occur mainly at the age of 2 years old and the type of overgeneralization mostly happens in this age is "Lexical retrieval". In this phenomenon, the child incorrectly overextends the object with another similar object, even after correctly labeling the particular object, for example, to overextend cake with drum (Ambridge et al., 2013, p. 48).

## **2.2 Role of input:**

Brandon et al. (2006) mentions "input" to be the one and only factor contributing development of language in children (p. 502). It is also mentioned by Huttenlocher (1998) that interaction can help to develop language and to increase "larger, richer vocabularies and more advanced syntactic skills" (as cited in Brandon et al., 2006, p. 504).

Gleitman, Newport and Gleitman (1984) say that motherese and adult speech prove to be helpful for the children in their acquisition of language if the input is one step beyond the stage the child is at because it help the children to get cues when they try to interact with provided input (as cited in McDonagh, 2008, p. 5). Jerome Bruner (1983) also stated about "scaffolding", a framework provided by adults to the children which assist them in their acquisition and if the input is one step ahead of the children, it cues their responses (as cited in McDonagh, 2008, p. 5).

Mehler et al. (1988) and Christophe et al. (2001) mention auditory input to be responsible for children's acquisition of language and also say that at the age of 3 days, children have a preference of the sound of their native language as they can recognize it's prosodic form (as cited

in Speer & Ito, 2009, p. 91). Jusczyk et al. (1993), Morgan and Saffran (1995) and Johnson and Jusczyk (2001) say that adult-child interaction hastens the language acquisition process in the first 3 years of children and a larger part of this interaction is prosody. Prosodies of different languages have impact on the children and benefit them in identification of speech sound, segmentation of the spoken signal into identifiable words and help in early word learning (as cited in Speer & Ito, 2009, p. 91). Moreover, phrasal prosody influences their own pronunciation to be appropriate and affective when they listen to the sentences and they also prefer the speeches which are matched with the phrasing pattern of their native language (Speer & Ito, 2009, p. 92).

### **2.3 Development in different stages**

Fenson et al. (1994) says that by the time of children's age from 8 months to 16 months, they collect at least 50 words in their vocabulary. Exposure in different environment and parents help them to learn more 50 words in next 2 months. After 16 months, 10% children can produce 180 words, 10% children can produce less than 10 words. It also happens that children do not produce at all and this is completely normal (as cited in Brandon et al., 2006, p. 500)

Children start to learn the language even before they come in this world. They learn different phonology and intonation patterns from the mother inside the womb. As a result, they are born with that much knowledge. After their birth, they are already able to differentiate between different sounds. They start to make vegetative sounds and by the age of 6-7 months they start babbling, which contains consonant-vowel syllables. It is also notable that babbling stage is a significant stage as the children experiment with different sounds throughout this stage. By the age of 9 to 12 months of children, their "jargon words" become a sequence of meaningful

utterances. The semantic development that started from the one year old age continues to the adulthood with the advanced knowledge and experience (Brandon et al., 2006, p. 500).

Kess (1993) stated that most of the children learn their native language before they are 5 and almost in a same pattern through different stages (as cited in Rahimpour, 2004, p. 58). According to Stork and Widdowson (1974), receptive skill and expressive skill are two central skills of child language development. Receptive skill starts at birth and expressive skill starts from the babbling stage, at the age of 3 months, which turns to reduplicating stage at the age of 9 months. In this stage, child responds to simple words and also starts repeating sounds. At the age of 12 months, the child passes through the “jargon stage” and reaches to the “single word utterance” or “holophrastic stage” at the age of 18 months old (as cited in Rahimpour, 2004, p. 60).

#### **2.4 Piaget's developmental stages:**

Piaget (2003) describes some developmental stages of language. First stage is “sensory-motor stage”, the pre-verbal stage which lasts for the first 18 months of the child. This is the stage of gathering practical knowledge. The second stage is pre-operational stage. Language, symbolic functions and representation of thoughts start in this stage. In the third stage, the child comes in contact of the idea of number, classification, ordering, spatial relations etc and this is termed to be “concrete operational stage”. Finally, the child exceeds this stage and reaches to the “formal or hypothetic-deductive operational stage”, when he/she can reason on hypothesis and attempts to new operations (p. 9). Piaget (2003) also mentioned 4 factors of language development. “Maturation” is the first one as language development starts from the origin of human. After that, comes “experience”, which is about physical environment and surroundings. Third one is “social transmission”, which is related to linguistic transmission, education etc and



the last one is “equilibration” which is a process of self-regulation or the sense of process with feedback (p. 10).

## **2.5 Role of interaction:**

According to McDonagh (2008), language is dependent on social context and the acquisition of language depends vastly on interaction (p. 4). The interaction of children with their caretakers has been given much importance in case of language acquisition. Jean Berko Gleason (1977) mentions both external and internal factors contributing language acquisition to be equally important and also claims that children do not acquire language without any help. He states:

They are not simply miniature grammarians working on a corpus composed of snatches and fragments of adult discourse (as cited in McDonagh, 2008, p. 5).

Moreover, McDonagh (2008) suggested different ways for adults to interact with the children to speed up the acquisition process, such as games and plays, small toys, news and time telling, stories, role playing etc. these games can be useful for children to provide them a model of language by adults (p. 12).

Tripp (1991) states that children remain busy in playing with their peers at the ages of 1 and 2. Through this playing, they develop their prosodic and phonetic articulation etc (p. 87). Eckert (1989) states, at the age of 3 and 4, they develop conversational and strategic skills. He also added that children often learn their vocabularies from travelling and mixing people outside their known peer groups. In this stage, peer groups can develop the children's vocabulary and help the children to learn more advanced phonological features (as cited in Tripp, 1991, p. 87).

Dunn (1989) found that when there is a friendly relation between the child and his/her older siblings, the child gets the chance to become “pretend-play-partner” of the older sibling. It is a great source of input, where the child gets to learn and practice different speech acts, styles and registers. Besides, it is also beneficial for busy parents (as cited in Tripp, 1991, p. 86).

MacWhinney (1999) describes a view known as “emergentist view”, which requires a theoretical framework to interact between biological and environmental process of child language development “Child’s physiological status”, “cognitive skills”, “social precocity in language acquisition”, “caretaker or adult input” etc. and interaction between them are the main focus of this view (as cited in Shiel et al., 2012, p. 11). It is mentioned by Shiel et al. (2012) that the “emergentist view” can provide language development framework for the children from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and environments as well as the children with special educational needs (p. 12).

From a social interactionist perspective, Tomasello (2003) states that the communicative approach is the driving force for the child’s acquisition of the language. It also motivates the child in the acquisition of structural components of vocabulary and grammar (as cited in Shiel et al., 2012, p. 16).

## **2.6 Vygotsky’s view of interaction:**

Vygotsky (1978) says that learning needs to be coordinated with child’s mental development level and to find out this level, the capability of child’s solving a problem independently was only taken to be granted. The capacity to solve a problem with someone’s assistance was not granted to be a part of mental development (p. 32). Vygotsky (1978) mentions “zone of proximal development” to be the distance between independent problem solving (actual developmental level) and problem solving under someone’s guidance (potential developmental

level). Zone of proximal development helps to have effectiveness in learning and also helps imitation to benefit learning (p. 33). Vygotsky (1978) focuses on that kind of learning in which interaction of the child with his/her peers develops the learning to the child's own achievement. He says-

“...an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement (p. 35).

## **2.7 Bruner's theory of constructivism:**

Mcleod (2012) says, Bruner's constructivism is similar to Piaget's and Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development but there are also some differences. Piaget and Bruner both talk about the stages but Bruner also says that learners construct their own knowledge and do this by classifying and systematizing by themselves and it is the most appropriate way for them to learn. Thus Bruner opposed Piaget's “notion of readiness”. Bruner (1966) also proposed three modes of representation: Enactive representation (action-based), Iconic representation (image-based) and Symbolic representation (language-based). Enactive representation is the primary level which encodes “muscle memory” or “motor tasks”, such as- storing the action of shaking any object in our memory. After that, iconic representation stage lasts from age 1 to age 6 and it is about the storing of information in our memory through visualization. Finally, the symbolic representation stage comes which is about storing information by codes or symbol, for example- language acquisition (as cited in Mcleod, 2012). Moreover, according to Mcleod (2012), Bruner does not

agree with Piaget's stages of development rather he believes in gradual development of cognitive skills.

According to Lutz and Huitt (2004), unlike Piaget, Bruner's constructivism is about that learning does not depend on children's biological states rather than it depends on their cognitive development and cultural knowledge to process information (p. 7). Bruner's theory focuses on interaction and experience too because learners construct their own knowledge and the knowledge is constructed based on their instruction and experience (p. 7).

## **2.8 Scaffolding:**

Foley (1994) says, scaffolding is a framework provided to children by the caregivers through different activities, such as- conversation, reading books together, bathing, sleeping etc. (p. 101). Cazden (1983) divided scaffolding into two categories, "vertical scaffolding" and "sequential scaffolding". Vertical scaffolding is when adults pull out the speech of children or elaborate the conversation by elongating it and on the other hand sequential scaffolding is when adults scaffold the children at the time of playing, eating, bathing etc. (as cited in Foley, 1994, p. 101). Again, Applebee and Langer (1983) state about "instructional scaffolding" which is to show the learner a manifestation of linguistic usage by someone more skillful through social and cultural contexts so that the learners can internalize it through their regular routine and activities (p. 101).

Kirby (2009) says about "semantic scaffolding" along with describing what the "scaffolding" is in the light of both "innate" and "behaviorist perspectives. Scaffolding is stretching current knowledge beyond to the next level with the assistance of experts and journey of transforming their "actual" knowledge to the "potentials". This assistance can be provided in

different forms but the most admired is through “linguistic channel” or spoken forms, such as conversations, problem solving, answering questions or clarifying something etc (p. 119). “Semantic scaffolding” is just another form of scaffolding where it is mainly about developing one's innate abilities so that it can be reached to the next higher level of grammatical acquaintance by increasingly following the adultlike native language competence (p. 118). The assistance in semantic scaffolding does not come from the expert or caregivers but instead it comes from learners' within (p. 120).

## **2.9 Other factors corresponding language acquisition and development:**

### **2.9.1 Parents and caregivers' role:**

When children learn to talk, they get help from the environment and close people around them. Parents are the most common people who help them in their learning. Research says something different. In a longitudinal study (Ornat et al., 1994), it has been found that parents only correct some pronunciations and semantic mistakes but they do not correct grammatical mistakes. However, it has no doubt that parents produce linguistics aspects in children's language (as cited in Ornat & Gallo 2004, p. 14). Snow & Ferguson (1977) have stated that, children's acquisition process gets smoothen by the stimulus which is “clear”, “simple” and “well formed speech” (as cited in Ornat & Gallo 2004, p. 19). Moreover, it has been also stated that, “simplification”, “exaggerated tone”, “use of basic vocabulary and simple sentences” help children to learn quickly (Ornat & Gallo 2004, p. 19). Parents' speeches can be referred to be such stimuli which are clear, simple and well-formed.

Cruttenden (1985) also point out “role of parental” in language learning of children (p. 99). When children start to uttering new sounds, they try to imitate the people around them and

most of the time they try to imitate their parents. Though it is also mentioned that parents' correction of the children's syntax does not help that much. Rather it helps in another term "social approval". If the children are reinforced positively when they utter the correct word or sound, they get approval and this helps them to repeat it frequently. Finally it results in correct production. Parental plays a role in successful communication of meaning too (p. 100).

Rodriguez et al. (2009) mentioned three aspects of parenting responsible for language development:

"Three aspects of parenting have been highlighted as central to children's early language and learning: (1) the frequency of children's participation in routine learning activities (e.g., shared bookreading, storytelling); (2) the quality of caregiver-child engagements (e.g., parents' cognitive stimulation and sensitivity/responsiveness); and (3) the provision of age-appropriate learning materials (e.g., books and toys) (as cited in Tamis-LeMonda & Rodriguez, 2009, p. 2).

Quality of parent-caregiver interaction plays an influential role in terms of language learning. Besides, the quantity and style of parents' interaction are also significant for developing language (Tamis-LeMonda & Rodriguez, 2009, p. 2).

Adult talk is being referred to be beneficial for child language development by Shiel et al. (2012). It helps child language development through imitation, prompts, repetition, recasts, and expansions etc. processes. Adult talk is a model for the child in the acquisition of vocabulary, grammatical structures, verb complexity etc. (p. 18). Moreover, it is mentioned that children need to come across vocabularies and other aspects of language before they get the profound perception of meaning. The way they can easily get encountered with words is through some contexts which will also develop their grammar, parts of speech etc (p. 19).

Psychologist Baumrind (1971) categorized four different types of parenting styles which produce different behaviour in children. They are- Authoritarian, Permissive, Authoritative and Uninvolved. Authoritarian parents are rigid, strict and punitive and that is why the children are unsociable, unfriendly and withdrawn. Permissive and uninvolved parents also produce unwanted behaviours in their children and their children are generally immature, moody, low self-control and abandoned behaved consecutively. The children of authoritative parents are the most successful, social, self-reliant, and independent. Their characteristics which are responsible for their children's upbringing are that they are firm, sets limit for their children, uses reasoning and encourages independence (as cited in Feldman, 2011, p. 401). Thus, parents' behaviour affects children's approach and behaviours.

### **2.9.2 Exposure and technology:**

Prensky (2011) states about the new generation, who is attached to technology and the old generation, who are not much connected with digital era. He names these two generation by "digital natives" and "digital immigrants" respectively (p. 1). Today's generation is habituated with technologies and various smart devices and that is why their language, thinking are different from the people who are not that much accustomed with these. As a result, there has been a gap between them and mostly it happens that adults do not understand the necessities of smart technologies because they are not used to use them. On the other hand, smart adults admire the use of new technology and inspire the natives instead of regretting about the old methods (p. 3). The remedy of this situation can be easy if the immigrants accept the change and also welcome new perspective and methods. For example- children can be learnt most effectively through computer games (p. 4).

Chonchaiya and Pruksananoda (2008) state that the children less than 12 months watch television regularly more than 2 hours, have chances six times to experience language delay (as cited in Loverude, 2014, p. 1). Loverude (2014) says that existence of background television disrupts children's "play skills", which is an important source of their language advancement (p. 4). Bono, Daley and Sigman (2004) introduce a term "JA" or "Joint Attention" and defined it as "the coordinated and shared visual attention between two people" and mark it to be responsible to generate the scaffold between mother and child. It is told that presence of background television creates problem in the effectiveness of the scaffolding (as cited in Loverude, 2014, p. 5). Moreover, television decreases the interaction rate between parents and children and it has a negative effect on language development. In spite of having these detrimental sides, television or other visualizations have positive effects on child's language. Simock, Garrity and Barr (2011) mentioned about a research where imitation from books and videos were tested and it was found that, children got encouraged to imitate when they are presented with visualizations (as cited in Loverude, 2014, p. 12). Linebarger and Walker (2004) say that interaction-based television shows increase expressive language production and vocabulary skills in children (as cited in Loverude, 2014, p. 18).

Close (2004) suggests from a research that children ages between two to five get facilitated in case of language development from high quality educational programs whereas children aged fewer than two are not confirmed to get facilitated from any kind of television program (p. 12). Kodaira (1990) says that children aged 18 to 24 months imitate songs and speech by watching television (as cited in Close, 2004, p. 13). Cupitt et al. (1989) describes an Australian study which was conducted on children of 30 months and their parents and it was found that 86 percent of 103 children learnt language and 52 percent learnt music, rhymes etc.



(as cited in Close, 2004, p. 13). Wright et al (2001) suggests that educational television programs help the most to learn language at the age of two to three years old and five years old children with more advanced language skills were found to watch educational programs more than commercial cartoons at their primary school years (as cited in Close, 2004, p. 18). Linebargar (2004) mentioned about negative segments of viewing adult programs and language-poor cartoons and other programs as they result in poor language production by the children (as cited in Close, 2004, p. 27). Finally, Close (2004) suggests that children under 2 years old should get minimum exposure of television and should be engaged in other language-enhancing activity (p. 38).

### **2.9.3 Freedom:**

Again, according to psychoanalyst Erikson (1963), the pattern of interaction, understandings, knowledge, perspective etc. are dependent on psychosocial development of human. He divided this development into eight stages and four of them take place in the infancy. Between 0-3 years old, two stages occur and they are- "Trust-versus-mistrust stage" (from birth- 1.5 years) and "Autonomy-versus- shame and doubt stage" (1.5 years- 3 years). In the first stage, proper care and interaction are required to build trust in the child by his/her caregivers through providing sufficient physical and psychological attachment. In the second stage, appropriate amount of independence and autonomy are required to provide so that they do not experience shame, self-doubt and over-protected (as cited in Feldman, 2011, p. 404). These stages are also closely related with the children's cognitive development.

**2.9.4 Cultural influence:**

According to Parlakian and Sanchez (2006), culture is an important aspect in case of language learning. The cultural belief is installed in child by the adults and these beliefs have an effect on how the adults interact with the child. It s also mentioned that culture shapes the way people anticipate and these are the things they also expect from their child to do in different ages (p. 53). They also said that children's language and literacy skill learning can be successful by preparing their curriculum according to their culture (p. 54).

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Research Methodology**

##### **3.1 Objective of the study:**

This study will help parents and caretakers to have a framework how their children's language can be developed properly from the very beginning. They will be able to focus on the right aspect for the betterment of their children's linguistic ability.

##### **3.2 Research questions:**

1. To what extent a child's environment influence his/her language development?
2. To what extent the quality of input and interaction influence first language acquisition of a child?

##### **3.3 Significance of the research:**

The research will help parents and caretakers to have a framework how their children's language can be developed properly from the very beginning. They will be able to focus on the right aspect for the betterment of their children's linguistic ability. Not only that but also the findings can enable them to recognize the mistakes they make and they will be able to develop their approaches of interaction to their children.

### **3.4 Methodology:**

#### **3.4.1 Data collection:**

For collecting data, the researcher had to choose 4 children, whose age group is 0-3 years old. Then the researcher had to find out details of their lifestyle, daily routine and also had to contact their mother and other caregivers. The researcher observed their activities a whole day for each child at their home. The researcher also had to visit the daycare where one of the four children stays in the week days. The researcher interviewed the mothers and caregivers of the four children.

#### **3.4.2 Instruments:**

To conduct this study, a list of interview questions, some video recordings and observation have been used as instruments. Each child was individually observed to collect data. Authentic data about their linguistic ability and responses were collected through observation. Moreover, some videos have been recorded and collected by the researcher. These videos also helped the researcher to know about the children's attempts to language development.

#### **3.4.3 Participants:**

The study comprised of 4 children of different ages. They are of 1 years old, 22 months old, 2 years old and 2.5 years old. There are 2 male children and 2 female children. Among these children, one child stays in the daycare from morning to evening five days in week. Other children live at home. One child's parents are separated and she lives with her mother. Her mother does not do any service. The rest of the children's parents are working parents.

**3.4.4 Method of data analysis:**

Collected data was categorized based on the answers found from the interview, observation and video recordings. Then differences between children in similar ages due to their environment were analyzed through qualitative method of analysis. and stages were analyzed to determine the advanced child. Then their environment, input, responsible factors were focused so that the researcher can conclude with appropriate factors for developing children's language.

**3.4.5 Limitation of the study:**

It was not possible for the researcher to cover a large number of children and also of different stages because of the time constraint. The researcher was unable to focus on that how different occupations of parents have influence on children's language. Moreover, as caretakers or maids of the children are not that much educated to understand the interview questions, it was not possible to bring out much information from them about children.

## Chapter 4

### Findings and Analysis

In this chapter, the subjects for language development will be introduced along with their environment, parents, and caretakers. Besides, details related to the subjects' cognitive development will also be presented in this chapter. At first, the questionnaire for the mothers of the children will be discussed and after that the observation of the researcher will be presented.

Child	Name	Age	Parents' occupation	Setting	Cognitive development stage	Language development stage
1.	Mahmud	22 months	Both are Senior lecturer of private universities	Daycare and home	Sensorimotor stage	Holophrastic stage
2.	Rihaan	2.5 years	Both are service holders in private companies	Home	Preoperation al stage	Telegraphic stage
3.	Tasin	2 years	Mother: Housewife (divorced)	Home	Preoperation al stage	Telegraphic stage
4.	Ananna	1 year	Father: Banker Mother: Sub-editor in online newspaper	Home	Sensorimotor stage	Holophrastic stage

**Table 1: Details of four children and their parents. Piaget's (2003) cognitive development stages and Stork & Widdowson's (1974) language development stages (as cited in Rahimpour, 2004, p. 59).**

#### **4.1 Finding from interviews:**

##### **Question 1: How old was your child when he/she first spoke a word? Give example.**

Mahmud was about 6 months old when he started babbling different sounds, such as- bababa, dadada, abba, amma etc. he used to repeat words or utterances without knowing meaning. He also used to make meaningless song-like utterances- "lulilulilaaaa..."

Rihaan was about 7 months when he uttered some sounds, such as- "ammmma", "abbbbb", "tatata" and "uuuu" etc but he did not continue these babblings for a long period. He did not babble any word except "ammmmmaaaaa" later. At the age of 11 months, he started calling his paternal aunt "annnaa" whose name is "Luna".

At the age of 7 months old, Tasin uttered her first sound, "ammu". She also used to say "maa" and similar sounds such as, "aaaaaaa", "eeeeee", "ammmm" etc.

Ananna was almost 5 months old when she spoke "amma" for the first time. She used to produce different sounds such as- "mmmm...", "aaaa..." etc. when she was 4 months old.

##### **Question 2: How many hours do you spend with your child every day?**

As Mahmud's mother is a teacher, she has to leave Mahmud in a daycare in the morning and pick him up at the evening. After that, she can spend 6 hours actively with Mahmud before sleeping at night. She also makes sure that she does not do any office work or household chores at that time.

Rihaan's mother has to go to office in the morning and she returns at evening. After that she spends time with Rihaan as much as she can because she has to cook and do some household works then. She can spend almost 4-5 hours with Rihaan.

Tasin's mother is a stay-at-home parent. She spends about 14 hours on an average with her child. She does not do any job. So she can spend a large amount of time with her child.

Ananna's mother works in an online newspaper. She does not have to go to office every day; instead she can do her works at home if she wants. She can spend almost 10-12 hours every day with her daughter.

**Question 3: Do you involve yourself in your child's feeding, bathing, sleeping etc. activities?**

Mahmud's mother involved herself in these activities in the weekends, when she is at home. In the week days, the caretakers of daycare do these activities. She also added that, from the age of 5 months old, she used to give signals for different activities to Mahmud. For example- before massaging oil, she used to give prosodic signal "telmalish (Oil massage), telmalish, telmalish..." and also asked the caretakers of the daycare to sing it while massaging oil, so that Mahmud could understand it is massage time and he could feel comfortable as he is going through his daily routine.

Rihaan's mother involves herself in different activities of her child only in the weekends. In the weekdays, his grandmother or maid does all these works. Sometimes his aunts also do these tasks. At night, she is with Rihaan when he is about to sleep and recites rhymes in melodious voices.



Generally, when Tasin's mother is present at home, she is involved in all types of activities of Tasin. When she is not at home, Tasin's grandmother and maternal uncle look after her and do the activities. Most of the time she does this works in a playful way so that Tasin enjoys the time.

As Ananna's mother does not have to go office regularly and she can manage her office works at home, most of the time she involves herself in Ananna's daily activities. When she is not at home, Ananna's grandmother does theses activities.

**Question 4: How much supportive is your spouse in your child's language acquisition?**

Mahmud's mother assures her spouse is very much supportive and also involves himself with Mahmud's upbringing and language development. He takes his family to different places and helps Mahmud to recognize objects.

Rihaan's mother says that Rihaan's father is very helpful. He plays with Rihaan and talks to him when his mother is busy in cooking and other works. He often goes in walk with his father to the lake a little away from their house or to his grandparent's house. His father never gets disturbed if he keeps asking a lot of questions or anything else.

As Tasin's parents are separated, she does not get to meet her father. Therefore, she is attached to only her mother since her birth.

Ananna's mother says that her husband is very supportive. He takes care of Ananna when her mother has to do household chores or office works. After returning from office, he plays with Ananna and talks to her so that she is not bored. He is also a writer and at night he is concern that Ananna does not have to face any problem in sleeping when he writes. Sometimes he takes part

in her feeding too. In his leisure times, he helps Ananna's mother by washing dishes, cleanings etc. and also makes food for Ananna so that her mother can spend time with Ananna.

**Question 5: How does your child currently communicate (e.g. gesturing, pointing, facial expressions etc.)?**

Mahmud is very close to 2 years. He communicates in a mixed process. He speaks through little sentences, most of them are "two word" sentences. He points fingers to different things at home and outside home. His mother told that they did this exercise of pointing objects around him since 6 months age of Mahmud. For example, "Where is the photo of baba?", "Where is the "palki (palanquin)?" etc. and they used to show those objects by pointing with fingers. Now, when he is asked about his known objects, he points them with his finger. At daycare, he was provided a walker at the age of 9 months old and he used to roam around and he pointed out different toys, objects with his finger.

Rihaan can speak almost everything. He produces sentences; sometimes a few words are not understandable because of his pronunciation but he clarifies those words by repeating a few times. He can express everything through his sentences. At the age of 25 months, he has started producing small sentences and at present the small sentences have turned into longer ones. After his babbling stages, he passed his "one word" and "two words" stages silently, even without uttering a single word. At that time, he used to show gestures if he needed anything.

Tasin's language is not much developed yet. According to her mother, she can only utter some words. She communicates mostly through facial expressions. She also uses meaningful and meaningless words to express herself. The most common word she uses is "amma". She always exclaims with this word to mean everything she wants. To make herself clear, she holds

someone's hand and drags them to show the object to that specific place. Thus she makes people understand what she needs.

Ananna is a moody girl, according to her mother. Generally she communicates through gestures and facial expressions. Sometimes she does not utter the words she can pronounce.

**Question 6: What are the sounds/words/chunks your child frequently utters?**

Mahmud says mostly "two words" or "three words" sentences, such as- "ami khabo", "baire jabo", "ma boka diyeche", "babu ghumay", "ami ghumabo" etc. sentences through which he can express himself. His mother says that, his every pronunciation is not that much clear but he can say it. He can say his parents' name and also the name of the maid of their house.

Rihann speaks everything. What he needs, what he wants to say, he can say it. Nowadays, he frequently recites the rhymes he watches on laptop.

Tasin frequently utters "amma", "kole" (lap), "happy birthday" etc. words. She also recites some rhymes, not very clearly. She also uses words to order something, such as- "ashona" (come), "dao" (give), "khulo" (open), "bop" (chup, shut up) etc.

Currently Ananna can say some words which are not that much clear. She keeps babbling sometimes while playing to herself and the sounds she babbles are a blend of meaningful and meaningless words. She utters most often some sounds, such as- "ammu", "baba", "nannu (grandmother)", "anki (aunty)" and also babbles sounds such as- "bababa...", "dadada...", "papapa...", "heuuw (hello)" etc. When she becomes angry, she shouts, "abba (father), abba, abbababababa...".

**Question 7: How does your child respond when you ask him/her to say something with you (to imitate you)?**

Mahmud has already learnt some rhymes in the daycare by imitating with the caretakers. He also imitates advertisements he watches on television. Moreover, he has gone through the exercise to say “thank you-welcome” from the age of 8 months both in the daycare and at home. She also added that Mahmud does not take food without spoon as he is habituated to use spoon in the daycare and after his meal is over, he drops the wastes in the basket and keeps the bowl or plate on the basin by himself. He is familiar with these daily activities. Even in the daycare, after lunch, Mahmud takes his pillow and goes to his room to sleep by his own because he knows his routine well.

Rihaan has learnt some rhymes by watching on laptop. He can recite those. When his mother asks him to imitate her, he does it often. For example, his mother asks him to say the prayer before sleeping with her and now he can say it by himself. Moreover, he learnt the rhymes not only from watching laptop but his mother also teaches him while spending time with him.

According to Tasin's mother, Tasin's imitating nature completely depends on her mood. If she is happy, she always responds positively and imitates words or chunks. If she is not in the mood, she is not going to do this.

Ananna responds sometimes when she is asked to imitate any word with her mother. She tries to pronounce the word but she cannot. She feels happy when her mother tries to make her say something and she smiles in joy. She learnt the words “nannu” and “anki” by imitating her mother saying “nanu (grandmother)” and “anki (aunty)”. She can follow words, for example- when her mother asks her to give her hand to her mother, she does it right then.

**Question 8: Does your child imitate gestures (e.g. waving bye-bye, point at the ball or something etc.)?**

Mahmud's mother said that Mahmud started waving bye-bye since he was 8 months old. Also he pointed to objects at the same time in the daycare.

Rihaan imitates gestures. In fact, he has spent a long period of time by showing gestures and when he plays with his cousins, he imitates them in the game and does what he is asked to do. Rihaan also waved bye-bye and salaam from around 1 year old. He pointed at the objects when he used to communicate through gestures.

As she watches cartoons regularly on television, she has learnt quite a handful of things. She tries to imitate whatever she sees on the television when she is in a good temper. For example- she waves goodbye just like those cartoon characters (ba-bye). Sometimes she also tries dance steps the way she watches different music videos. When she is happy, she imitates almost every facial expression made by her mother or uncle. Sometimes, when someone shouts saying something, she tries to say it as well. For example- during any cricket match, if her mother and uncle shout "out", "four", "six", "hurray!", she spontaneously imitates their words with raising hands just like them.

Ananna imitates gestures a lot. She waves ta-ta, point at different toys of her. Her mother does "origami", a paper crafting art as a part-time job, she also tries to take papers in hand and fold to make something like her mother. When her mother sometimes feeds her father and asks to feed her father too, she does it after her mother shows feeding her father several times. Moreover, she tries to type on laptop the way her parents do and even does not let her parents to

use any electronic device as she wants to do it the way they do. She also tries to sip a cup of tea and coffee as she watches her parents to do so.

**Question 9: Does your child interact with other children (siblings, daycare, neighbours or babysitter) on a regular basis?**

Mahmud is very interactive with other children. When any child comes to his house, he asks the child to come and play with him. According to his mother, he learnt it from the daycare. He has to live with other children in the daycare and has to share toys with them as well. It created the practice of interaction in him and he is very joyful when he has someone to play or to roam. He also talks to them while playing with them, such as- “asho asho”, “bosho”, “khelo”, “gari theke namo”, “amar garite bosho” and so on.

Rihaan interacts with other children. He plays with his cousins and other children too. Though at first he feels uneasy when he meets any new child, but after some time he becomes familiar and plays with others. Sometimes he does not want to share his cycle with his cousins but most of the time he shares.

Tasin interacts with other children. Most of the time she finds kids to be very amusing. She prefers kids of her own age or elders. She also communicates with her neighbours by some hand gestures and unclear greetings in her balcony. When kids are around her, she becomes happier and jumps in joy but she takes part in their game very rarely. She loves to watch other children playing and sometimes tries to imitate them.

Ananna likes to play with other children. If she becomes familiar with other child, she loves to interact with them. She produces small utterances when she plays with them. With some of her cousins and friends, she is very joyful.

**Question 10: What are the sources he/she is exposed to (E.g. television programs, videos, rhymes, advertisements etc.)?**

Mahmud watches advertisements and mostly cartoons on TV. His parents gave him exposure of cartoon when he was about 18 months old. They prefer English cartoons for him so that he has a good hold in English pronunciation. He watches the cartoon "Ninja Hattori" which is in English. He also watches "Motu-Patlu" which is in Hindi but he does not utter any Hindi word, except the title of the cartoon "Motu-patlu".

Rihaan likes to watch cartoons, rhymes on the television and laptop. Though he has a long time at home without his parents, he does not watch television that much. He watches television from about 1 year old. He watches cartoons in both English and Hindi. He does not like to watch songs.

She mostly watches animated movies, such as animations related animals and princess. Different rhymes and movies on child character are her favourite. Another thing she watches is music videos, especially with loud music.

Ananna is not exposed to that much sources yet. She watches cartoons on television. She watches cartoon as well as advertisements but does not imitate any word or gestures.

**Question 11: Are there any specific show/music/rhymes your child fond of?**

Mahmud watches "ABC rhymes videos", "tonatuni Bengali rhymes videos" etc in the daycare once or twice in a week. His mother lets him to watch "Sisimpur", a Bengali animated cartoon show because it is leaning-based, entertaining and most importantly it is in Bengali. She

wants to give Mahmud a good grasp of Bengali from the childhood. At home, besides “Sisimpur”, his parents let him watch videos of alphabets, numbers and he enjoys a lot.

Rihaan watches the cartoon “Shiva” in Hindi, which is about a little boy, who does adventures with his little bicycle. He enjoys watching it. Though he does not like listening music, he enjoys the background music of “Shiva”. Rihaan also likes to watch alphabet rhymes on the laptop but the video he loves the most is a rhyme “Wheels on the bus go round, round, round...”. He likes different versions of this rhyme in the internet as he likes buses. He also watches “Tom and Jerry” in English.

Tasin is fond of “Frozen”, “Tangles”, “Nemo”, “Minions” etc. “Teletubbies” cartoon is also her most favourite one. She likes watching alphabet rhymes with various pictures. Her most favourite thing is pop music videos of Indian Bangla and Hindi songs. She loves to watch them and most of the time she does not take food without watching them.

Ananna likes cartoons. She also likes toys of cartoon characters. She likes melodious advertisements on television and smiles when she watches them.

**Question 12: Does your child remember events from the past and respond depending on it? (e.g. you forbid to do anything or disliked it and he/she does not attempt to do that again).**

The question was if the child remembers events from the past and responds depending on it. Mahmud's mother says that she made an imaginative scary character “Keu” to signal him the forbidden activities. For example- they have an aloe vera plant in their balcony and his mother pointed to it and said to him that “It is Keu. You should not touch this”. “Keu” resembles something horrible and dark. Therefore, when Mahmud does anything mischievous, his mother



pinches him in the neck and says, "Keu has bitten you" and he understands that he should not do that again. For example, he does not touch aloevera plants and even over generalizes pineapple leaves to be aloevera. He does not touch it when his mother says, "Its Keu, Keu". This overgeneralization was applied to darkness or dark rooms for Mahumd as well. He thinks everything that is scary is "Keu".

Rihaan can remember past events. He can understand and knows what his parents and other persons want him to do. Sometimes Rihaan fights with other children while playing if they have any argument and pinches them but it has become very rare because his parents disliked it and forbidden him to do that. They also said that if Rihaan fights with other children, they would not take him for outing. Gradually, he lessens fighting with other children. Again, sometimes he troubles his mother while taking food at home. When he goes to his grandparents' home, he knows that one of his aunts scolds him if he does not take food. He never creates problems if her aunt wants to feed him. He insists her to feed him rice or milk by himself so that he does not get scolded and her aunt becomes happy.

Tasin remembers events from the past but the rate is very low. If she can remember, she does not express it. Sometimes she recognizes faces she knows, but she tries to act that she does not know them. She knows that it is not good to hit someone and she is not supposed to do this. So, when she hits anyone, she makes sure her mother, uncle or grandmother is not around her.

Ananna's mother tells her not to dirty the place around the plate where she takes food. She remembers it but when she takes food sometimes she forgets. When her mother reminds her, she tries it again. According to her mother, she is too little to remember things. Though she can remember little things, for example- her grandfather died before 2 months. She liked him a lot

and used to go to his room. Her grandfather talked to him. After his death she used to look at his room's door. She expects her grandfather to come out the room and talk to her.

**Question 13: Do you think your child connects things in case of learning language? (e.g.**

**Fishes live in water, therefore, crocodiles, snails, turtle etc are fish).**

Mahmud learns different things at home and also in the daycare. He can connect similar types of object. One day his mother was watching a film of monkey and apes and showed him the monkey saying "monkey monkey". Then he brought out his big monkey toy from his bag. Also he showed the plastic monkey toy he had. Therefore, he can connect the visualization with his previous knowledge as he had already seen monkey in his word books and can understand that he had this toy too. Another day, while walking with his grandfather outside his house, they saw a puppy and his grandfather asked him to touch it. His grandfather also named it, "Tommy". The next day while walking, they saw another puppy of different colour and he said, "Tommy".

Rihaan connects things and different objects. When he watched the picture of "different vegetables" in English alphabet books, he says, "morich" (chilli) at once. He understands that it is a kind of vegetable and at that moment he only can recall "morich" or chilli. As a result, he overgeneralizes "vegetable" to be "chilli". He also recognizes the "jug" but as he could not recall the name of it, he says, "ata amader bashay ase" that means "we have this at our home".

Tasin cannot connect things and her mother thinks she is too little to do that. When she is out home and watches anything she has in her house, she exclaims with joy and smiles. She also points to show that object to her mother.

Ananna's mother says she is not able to connect things yet. She is very young to do this. Her vocabulary is not that much developed. As a result, it is not possible for her to

connect things but she can connect cartoons with her toys. She likes those toys which she watches on television and talks meaningless words to them.

**Question 14: Mention your child's strength and weakness in case of acquisition of first language.**

It is about the present linguistic ability of the child. Mahmud's strength is that he can easily communicate in his first language, Bangla. His vocabulary is quite developed. His English vocabulary is not that much developed. This is termed to be his present weakness by his mother. His parents are working on it by translating single words and sentences for him, such as- "Sit, sit, boshho, boshho", "come, come, asho" etc. Another weakness is he gets nervous when he goes to any crowd. It seems that he does not understand what he has to do. His parents are trying to help him to overcome this situation.

Rihaan is fluent in Bangla. This is his strength as he can express it all. His vocabulary is of advanced level. If he does not recognize any object. He asks at once, "ata ki?" or "what is this?" His syntax is quite developed. He cannot understand English well or use it that much. According to his mother, it is his weakness. She also points out that lack of exposure is the reason of this weakness. When Rihaan understands his parents are trying to teach him some words in English, he avoids it. For example, if his parents say, "eat, eat, khao, khao, eat mane (means) khao, boloto baba, eat mane ki? (Say, what does eat mean?)" and he does not answer the question.

The strength of Tasin's language acquisition can be said that she learnt most of the English words from her desired movies. She is weak in Bangla. Moreover, her language ability is not that much advanced. She still produces meaningless words.

Ananna can understand almost everything that her parents say to her and tries to imitate her parents. It can be termed to be her strength. She cannot express herself through words. It is her weakness that her vocabulary is not built that much and her mother thinks that it would be well-developed if she could pass more time with Ananna.

**Question 15: What was the role of innate ability of your child for language acquisition?**

**(Innate ability is something which helps him/her to learn new things by him/herself without any exposure).**

While answering this question, Mahmud's mother hardly could say anything that was Mahmud's innate ability. She could remember Mahmud's early period, while he babbled and made sound by himself "bababaaaa", "dadadaaaa" etc. He also uttered "amma", "ammi" etc sound by himself but they used to say "ma" and "baba". So, it was his innate ability. Moreover, without any exposure, he used to sing meaningless tunes "lalalulilala..."

According to Rihaan's mother, innate ability has no any specific role in Rihaan's language acquisition. If innate ability has any role, Rihaan would start talking more quickly.

In Tasin's case, innate ability did not play any role. According to her mother, she learns things from her environment and watching television.

Ananna's mother did not notice anything specific in her child's language what she has learnt by herself. Almost every utterance she produces is learnt from her surroundings.

**Question 16: Which one is more responsible for your child's present linguistic ability- Environment and parents/caretakers' role or the innate ability of your child to learn language?**

Mahmud's mother thinks environment is more responsible for his linguistic ability. They have fields in front of their house where Mahmud can play and watch different aspects which helped him to develop his acquisition. Moreover, she says that she and her spouse try their best to give Mahmud proper time at home and it enhances his positive attitude. She does not do office works at home and spends 6 hours completely with her child which a mother who lives at home might not be able to give it to her child.

Rihaan's mother says, environment is more accountable for her son's linguistic ability. Though his parents cannot give that much time but he spends a lot of time with his grandfather and aunts. This communication is the reason for his present linguistic ability.

Tasin's mother says, it is environment and her surrounding which helped her to learn. She learns from the people around her and from the exposure she gets through cartoons, music etc. her mother also said that they talk among themselves a lot in front of her so that she can learn.

Environment and parents' role is more responsible for Ananna's present linguistic ability. She imitates her parents and other relatives a lot. It is responsible for her present development.

**Question 17: Do you try giving your child the cultural exposure? (e.g. outing on 21<sup>st</sup> February, 26<sup>th</sup> March, book fair, visit to Shahid minar etc.)**

Mahmud's parents are very much careful about this. They celebrate 21<sup>st</sup> February (International mother language day) and also take Mahmud to book fair. In his daycare, he puts flowers on the paper-made Shahid minar with other children.

Rihaan's mother says that she and his father try to give him cultural knowledge. Every time it is not possible for them to take Rihaan for outing and show him the cultural facts but they try. They go to "pahela baishakh" fair, victory day celebration etc when they get time.

Tasin's mother says that her daughter is still a kid who does not understand these events. Though they take her with them when they go out in such events and she really enjoys those events.

Ananna's father is a new writer. His three books have been published in the book fair of 21<sup>st</sup> February. She went in the book fair with her parents. She also visited "Shaheed minar" in victory day. Moreover, her parents make her wear green and red dresses on the day when Bangladesh cricket team has a match against any other team and try to make her understand that they are supporting their country.

## **4.2 Researcher's observation:**

### **4.2.1 Mahmud:**

The researcher observed both Mahmud's house and daycare. His lifestyle is very disciplined and well-maintained. He follows his daily routine time to time and he is fine with it. He is not different from the other children of his age. Though he has two different settings at home and daycare, he does not undergo confusion because his parents and caregivers of daycare maintain the same routine and activities at the similar time. Sometimes he tries to make slight changes at home but it is not only because the setting is different but he gets attachment of his mother. For example, in the daycare, after lunch Mahmud takes his pillow and goes to his bed by himself but at home, after lunch he does not go to sleep till his mother does not come and make him sleep. He is not that much attracted to cell phones or different digital technologies. He did not show any interest when researcher took photos and talked in the phone.

In the daycare, after breakfast, Mahmud's lessons start with other children. There are three different groups of children according to their age. The first group contains children whose age is between five months to two years. Second group contains children whose age is between

two to three years. The last group is for those who are between three to five years old. Each group has different lesson plans, activities and curriculum. The curriculum and learning materials are the combination of three different renowned curriculums:

i. Early Childhood Development Resource Centre

Institute of Educational Development (IED), BRAC University, Bangladesh.

ii. Bijoy Shishu Shikkha, Ananda Multimedia

iii. Pre-primary Curriculum,

National Curriculum & Textbook Board (NCTB), Bangladesh.

All the materials prepared for the children are appropriate for the age groups. The researcher watched the curriculum of group two, the group for the children of two years old. Mahmud is supposed to be in group one as he is not two yet but the instructor of the daycare said that Mahmud's development is in advanced stage and this is the reason he is promoted to the next group with the elder children of two years old in spite of being twenty two months old. Each child has to achieve the milestone to get promoted to the next group. The researcher has watched the samples of their activities and exercises. They are taught different subjects- English, Bengali alphabets, rhymes, numbers, idea of greater and smaller, less and more etc. Besides, they are taught their basic information, name, and parents' name, name of seasons, body parts, fruits, vegetables and different objects. They are also taught social, emotional and motor skills. As Mahmud is regular there from five months old, it was easy for him to get habituated with the curriculum and he could grasp it. He is independent in case of decision making but he does not break those rules he is used to maintain. He does some of his own works and his parents think this freedom lets him to broaden his perspective and fasten the learning process.

**4.2.2 Rihaan:**

Rihaan lives at home with maid servant and sometimes he lives with grandparents and aunts when his parents are in the office. He is a quiet boy the whole day but he is very stubborn after evening when his parents return home. It is mentioned before that he was silent for a long time and started talking when he became 25 months old. He can understand it that his parents are not with him and he should be decent. His behaviour changes when his parents are with him. He becomes a little bit mischievous and demanding. Most of the time, he disturbs his mother when she cooks in the evening because he wants his mother to spend time with him. As a result, he demands weird things, such as- he wants to ride in the bus after the evening. Then he does not want to take dinner willingly when his parents are at home. His mother says that it is their fault that they cosseted him from the beginning as they thought that children with working parents becomes a little demanding but it was not right. This is the reason, now he tries to get his demands fulfilled by troubling his parents and crying over. After his parents understand the fact, they try to maintain discipline as much as possible and think that it would be better if they had done it before. He is independent in case of decision making to some extent but does not do his own work that much. He is used to watch videos and rhymes in the laptop and cell phones. When anyone comes to their house, he wants his/her phone and want to watch rhymes or videos of buses. He also tells his aunts to show him videos in cell phones while eating. He watches pictures in his books of alphabets but when his parents try to teach him anything, he does not like it.



### **4.2.3 Tasin:**

Tasin is 2 years old. She lives with her mother at his grandparent's house. Her mother is separated from his father after her birth. She does not know her father or does not have any idea of any fatherly figure. Her world is limited within her house and some familiar persons- her mother, grandparents, uncle and the servants of her home. In spite of being 2 years old, her language development is in very basic level. She only utters a handful of words. The researcher specified some reasons behind this. Her mother is very much conscious about her. She does all the activities by herself and does not allow anyone to do these. Her mother is overprotective and does not want her daughter to go outside and play with other children because she thinks Tasin will get hurt. She does not permit Tasin to interact with everyone. As a result, she is too much introvert. She does not want to express herself clearly. When she sees her known persons or any relative comes to her house, she smiles and sometimes screams in joy but the very next moment she pretends that she does not know the person. She does not like when she goes for outing to anyone's house. She watches other children playing but rarely participates with them. She does not like if anyone holds her hand and she screams out of panic as she is mentally very feeble. She does not like crowds at all. Her mother celebrated her birthday two times and she did not cut the cakes as there were so many people. She cried a lot and did not enjoy the theme-based parties. She does not wander alone ever. She is always holding her mother or uncle's hand. The researcher thinks that there is a huge lacking of input and this is the reason of her undeveloped speech pattern. She is also a sensitive kid. She wants every work to be done the way she wants and if this does not happen she becomes very irritated and she cries a lot. She likes to watch videos or pictures in tablets or cell phones. When she watches any cell phone, she wants to open the key lock by pressing or touching the keys of the phone. She knows that phones are locked by

the passwords because she watches people around her to activate the phone with passwords. She also knows that in his uncle's phone, the password is his uncle's thumb's print. So, when she wants play with his uncle's phone, she holds his uncle's hand and makes the thumb to touch the phone. She also does not let anyone to touch her mother's phone as she considers it to be her. She is not independent to do any of her works. Most of the time she is kept busy in watching videos of cartoons and songs as she needs something to do the whole day.

#### **4.2.4 Ananna:**

Ananna is 1 year old. Her linguistic ability is quite satisfactory according to her age. Her environment is also favorable for her language acquisition and development. Her mother says that she is a moody girl. She does not have any mate she can play with in her neighbourhood. She plays alone most of the time. She is happy when any child comes as a guest at their house and she enjoys playing with other children. She shares her toys and her baby car with other children. When any elder person comes for the first time, she is not very comfortable with him/her and does not want to befriend with him/her. It takes a little time to get cozy with someone new. She responds a lot through her gestures. When the researcher called her names repeatedly, she was looking with curiosity in her eyes. First half an hour she observed the researcher and when she watched her mother to speak friendly with the researcher, she started responding to the researcher. She took the researcher's phone and her mother said several times, "Talk to your grandma, she is over the phone", she took the phone near her ears and shouted, "heuuw, heuuw (hello, hello)". The researcher tried to record videos of Ananna but she did not allow her to do that because whenever she watches any electronic device, she wants to take that in hand. Her mother said that she is not comfortable in new places. Before some days, they went to stay at her aunt's place and she became very upset at first. She also cried a little to her mother.

After 1 hour, when she found the place wide enough to wander and many new objects to touch, she was very happy. She became relaxed there and did not disturb her mother in the meal times. She loves when her father plays with her. She is very expressive when she is comfortable in any place.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

This chapter presents the analysis of the data from findings and an attempt to come back with the central research questions. Though the four children are of about similar ages, their environment, lifestyle, activities, input and interaction levels are different from each other and these variations have noticeable effect on their acquisition and development of first language.

From the findings, the four children's environments and their influence on the children's language development can be understood. Firstly, in case of Mahmud, his environment is quite different from three other children as he spends a large portion of his day in the daycare centre. There he gets proper stimuli from the caregivers and peer children. He is also kept induced in different activities which improves his cognitive and motor skills. Besides, he gets sufficient time and instructions from his parents at home, which gradually develop his ability to comprehend and produce more advanced language. If theories are taken into account, it will be clear why Mahmud has a good hold in his first language. In Islam (2013), it is mentioned that "Classical behaviorism" is about stimulus which believes that large quantity of stimulus produces large number of responses and with the time it becomes a part of habit (p. 500). Language learning is said to be similar as other habits are formed, "habit formation" and developed through "imitation" and a termed to be a process where environment and feedback are equally important as stimulus and response (p. 501). Mahmud's environment produced him stimulus for a long time and it became a part of his habit. Moreover, the findings say that he greets thank you, welcome from about 8 months old. It is because he was made to do regular practice by his parents and caregivers of daycare. Tripp (1991) mentions a research where in

repetitive activities children imitated greetings, opening moves of conversations and where it is possible to imitate. They found it easier to follow same formulas used by others and repeated those (p. 86). Imitation and repetition is implemented in this case.

On the other hand, in spite of being older than Mahmud, Rihaan's language development took more time as he did not have anyone who can produce him proper stimulus regularly. Besides, his mother is also busy after returning at home and thus his habit formation process took time to be effective. It made him to be silent for a long period but when his stimulus level became as per his requirement, he started to produce it fluently. This silent period is significant because his process of receiving stimulus did not stop that time. It is normal that in spite of being silent, children learn specific number of vocabularies in different stages. Fenson et al. (1994) says, after 16 months, 10% children can produce 180 words, 10% children can produce less than 10 words. It also happens that children do not produce at all and this is completely normal (as cited in Brandon et al., 2006, p. 500). Rihaan also passes his time in his grandparents' house playing with his cousins who are 2-4 years older than him. It also helped him to develop his linguistic capability. Dunn (1989) mentioned a research finding that when there is a friendly relation between the child and his/her older siblings, the child gets the chance to become "pretend-play-partner" of the older sibling. It is a great source of input, where the child gets to learn and practice different speech acts, styles and registers. Besides, it is also beneficial for busy parents (as cited in Tripp, 1991, p. 86). This is also implemented for Mahmud as he gets peer partners in the daycare. They take part with him in playing and other different activities from the very early age. As a result, his language development is faster than the other children.

According to He (2010), learner gets input from the environment and the quality and quantity of input leads to form habit. Repeatedly pronounced words attach into learner's mind and thus the habit turns into acquisition (p. 16). Tasin's environment is more challenging for her language development. Her environment is very much narrow and only a few people are around her to provide her with required amount of stimulus. She does not even undergo any activity for better language production. As a result, her acquisition rate is very low. Another thing which is also important to mention is that her mother is a single mother and she has no connection with her father. Cruttenden (1985) says, Parental plays a role in successful communication of meaning by repetition and reinforcement (p. 100). Absence of her father is also an obstacle in her language acquisition. If other children's situations are considered, they are being facilitated than Tasin, as their fathers participate actively in developing their language.

Ananna is the youngest of the four children. Her environment is quite favorable and in spite of being a working woman, her mother gets to spend more time with her. This is the reason that her cognitive growth and language development are quite normal and progressive. She gets proper stimuli from her parents and surroundings. She started babbling at the age of 5 months old, which is the effect of her environment. Sundberg (1996) states that at the age of around 4 to 6 months, children start babbling of the phonemes of their parents' language (p. 21). Her parents talk a lot in front of her so that she can learn from their conversation. Her father is also responsible enough to develop her language through spending time and playing. "Adult talk" has been referred to be beneficial for child language development by Shiel et al. (2012). It helps child language development through imitation, prompts, repetition, recasts, and expansions etc. processes. Adult talk is a model for the child in the acquisition of vocabulary, grammatical structures, verb complexity etc. (p. 18). Moreover, it is mentioned that children need to come

across vocabularies and other aspects of language before they get the profound perception of meaning. The way they can easily get encountered with words is through some contexts which will also develop their grammar, parts of speech etc (p. 19). At present she is 1 year old and produces various "one-word utterance" from the incentives she gets from the environment. According to Stork and Widdowson (1974), at the age of 12 months, the child passes through the "jargon stage" and reaches to the "single word utterance" or "holophrastic stage" at the age of 18 months old (as cited in Rahimpour, 2004, p. 60).

Feldman (2011) mentions about clinical psychology Jean Piaget's four stages of cognitive development. The stages are- Sensorimotor (birth-2 years), Preoperational (2-7 years), Concrete operational (7-12 years) and Formal operational stage (12years-adulthood) (p. 405). Among the four children, Rihaan and Tasin are in Preoperational stage and Mahmud and Ananna are in sensorimotor stage. Rihaan and Tasin's cognitive skills should be more advanced than Mahmud and Ananna but the study finds out the opposite scenario. Piaget (2003) describes some developmental stages of language. First stage of cognitive development is "sensorimotor stage", the pre-verbal stage which lasts for the first 18 months of the child. This is the stage of gathering practical knowledge (Piaget, 2003, p. 9). According to his described features of this stage, it is known that in this stage, children use language as a means by which they begin to represent reality to himself and towards the end of the first year, they are able to produce one-word utterances. In the early period of second year, they are aware of concepts of agents and location and it will be before 18 months (Cruttenden, 1985, p. 109). The findings tell about the present linguistic ability of the four children. Firstly, Mahmud is 18 months old and most of the speeches are "Two-word sentences", which refers to be well-developed. Rihaan took more time than Mahmud. He was 25 months old when he started producing "Two-word sentences". Tasin is 2

years old and her development level is very low than Mahmud. She only utters a few words and mostly utters the word “amma (mother)” to express her requirements. Though she is in the preoperational stage, she has not even completed the milestones of sensorimotor stage, the “Two-word utterance”. Tasin is going through the first year completion of sensorimotor stage. Her cognitive features are improving with the time and she utters some “One-word utterances”. Piaget (2003) also mentioned about four factors of language development- Maturation, Experience, Social transmission and Equilibration. Findings tell that all of the four children's “Maturation” is normal, that is there is no physical or mental difficulty in their upbringing. They are different in case of “Experience” as each of them is in different environment and the third factor “Social transmission” is also related to their “Environment” which is not equal for them. The difference of these two factors is responsible for the last factor, “Equilibration”. As their environment and social transmission vary, their self-assessment process also differs and it is the reason for their different linguistic abilities.

Input and interaction are two important aspects after environment. Only encouraging environment is not enough for language acquisition and development. Input and stimuli is required along with interaction. The interaction also varies in case of parents, caregivers and peers. Better cognitive development is not only if a child can solve a problem alone but also if he/she is able to solve a problem under someone's guidance. Vygotsky (1978) mentions “zone of proximal development” to be the distance between independent problem solving (actual developmental level) and problem solving under someone's guidance (potential developmental level). Zone of proximal development helps to have effectiveness in learning and also helps imitation to benefit learning (p. 33).



Findings make it clear how the four children's language acquisition and development rate is affected by the rate of their interaction with different people. Mahmud's mother not only interacts with him through different activities, but also use some signals so that this interaction give him cues. Cruttenden (1985) stated that operant conditioning makes the original behavior to be repeated and the effect of the behavior is responsible for the repetition (p. 98). Mahmud's mother's signaling makes him to do the specific works he is used to do. Rihaan and Mahmud's parents are working parents and they both get almost similar time from their parents. Mahmud is facilitated by the signals provided by his mother and the caregivers in the daycare, which is absent in Rihaan's and other children's case.

McDonagh (2008) suggested different ways for adults to interact with the children to speed up the acquisition process, such as games and plays, small toys, news and time telling, stories, role playing etc. These games can be useful for children to provide them a model of language by adults (p. 12). Without interaction, it is not possible for the children to get these necessary elements in the environment. Mahmud gets all the necessary elements through constructive interaction mostly in the daycare and also at home. He plays and goes through different processes with the other daycare children under caregivers' guidance. Rihaan's chances to receive the necessary input and interaction are limited comparatively than Mahmud as he does not regularly goes to his grandparents' house when his parents are at office. When he goes there, he plays with his cousins and aunts. Tasin's situation is different from two of them. She does not get the facility of interacting with everyone and misses the input she requires for her language development. She only gets a minimal input and feels bored with the same interaction. This is might be the reason that she tries to remove the monotony by watching video songs and cartoons, which is also not beneficial for developing her linguistic ability. Linebargar (2004) mentioned

about negative segments of viewing adult programs and language-poor cartoons and other programs as they result in poor language production by the children (as cited in Close, 2004, p. 27). Ananna also gets an adequate quantity of necessary inputs from his parents and grandparents through conversation, story-telling, game playing etc. Her situation is corresponding to Bruner's constructivism. According to Lutz and Huitt (2004), Bruner's theory focuses on interaction and experience because he believes that learners construct their own knowledge and the knowledge is constructed based on their instruction and experience (p. 7). As Ananna is getting enough input from her environment, she is acquiring the knowledge for improving her cognitive skills. Cognitive development is closely related to language acquisition and development. Bruner's constructivism is about that learning does not depend on children's biological states rather than it depends on their cognitive development and cultural knowledge to process information (p. 7).

Scaffolding is an important part of interaction which is also effective for language development. Both vertical and sequential scaffolding divided by Cazden (1983) are equally important for the children's language development (as cited in Foley, 1994, p. 101). Four of the children get vertical and sequential scaffoldings from their parents and caregivers. Mahmud gets both from the daycare and home, whereas Rihaan gets scaffolded when he is with his parents and grandparents. Tasin also gets scaffolded from her mother and family members but her scaffolding level is low because she uses the time in watching television and it is harmful for her linguistic development. It is told that presence of background television creates problem in the effectiveness of the scaffolding (as cited in Loverude, 2014, p. 5). Ananna gets scaffolding from her parents and also from her grandparents but as she is young, it will be more helpful for her when she will be in the higher stages of language development.

Mahmud and Rihaan seem to be advanced than the other two children and their speeches contain some aspects which are missing in Tasin and Ananna's speeches. Overgeneralization is one of them. From the findings, it has been noticed that Mahmud overgeneralizes pineapple leaves to be aloevera and it is also related to the things he scared of, such as- darkness. Rihaan overgeneralizes vegetable to be chilli. It is evident that their speeches are in higher level. These types of overgeneralization are called "Lexical overgeneralization" and it is frequent in the age of 2 years old (Ambridge et al., 2013, p. 48).

Apart from environment, input and interaction, there are some other factors which have influence on children's language development. The exposures of children also play a vital role in their language learning. Every child in this study watches cartoons, rhymes and alphabet videos in the computer, laptop, cell phones or television. They enjoy these exposures. Nowadays, these exposures are very common and also popular and Prensky (2011) names this generation as "Digital natives" while the adult generation is "Digital immigrants" (p. 1). It is also mentioned in the research that the immigrants should understand the necessity of using these technologies for the betterment of the natives and to inspire the natives (p. 4). Study says that these digital exposures are beneficial in case of language acquisition and development but excessive exposure and inappropriate exposure can be detrimental for their language skills. Loverude (2014) says that existence of background television disrupts children's "play skills", which is an important source of their language advancement (p. 4). Proper exposure can be helpful for the children. Simock, Garrity and Barr (2011) mentioned about a research where imitation from books and videos were tested and it was found that, children got encouraged to imitate when they are presented with visualizations (as cited in Loverude, 2014, p. 12). Moreover, Cupitt et al. (1989) describes an Australian study which was conducted on children of 30 months and their parents

and it was found that 86 percent of 103 children learnt language and 52 percent learnt music, rhymes etc. (as cited in Close, 2004, p. 13) In this study, Tasin is the child who is the most lagged behind in case of language development and it is also found that she spends a large portion of her daily life in watching cartoons, rhymes and mostly Bengali and Hindi music videos, which are adult content. Wright et al (2001) suggests that educational television programs help the most to learn language at the age of two to three years old and five years old children with more advanced language skills were found to watch educational programs more than commercial cartoons at their primary school years (as cited in Close, 2004, p. 18). These are the reasons that in spite of some having some advantages, children are suggested minimal exposure of television, videos and especially adult content. Close (2004) suggests that children under 2 years old should get minimum exposure of television and should be engaged in other language-enhancing activity (p. 38). Instead of adult or inappropriate contents, children are suggested to watch more educational programs. Linebarger and Walker (2004) say that interaction-based television shows increase expressive language production and vocabulary skills in children (as cited in Loverude, 2014, p. 18).

Independence is a factor which is important for children to develop their language. Language is a habit and habits can be formed and shaped. According to Mahmud's parents, they give him enough independence so that his personality is built strong from the early period. He also never misuses it or tries to manipulate anything in his daily activities. According to psychoanalyst Erikson's (1963) developmental stages, the first one is "Trust-versus-mistrust stage" (from birth- 1.5 years). In this stage, proper care and interaction are required to build trust in the child by his/her caregivers through providing sufficient physical and psychological attachment. In the second stage "Autonomy-versus- shame and doubt stage" (1.5 years- 3 years),

appropriate amount of independence and autonomy are required to provide so that they do not experience shame, self-doubt and over-protected (as cited in Feldman, 2011, p. 404). It is also a reason that Mahmud is advanced than the other three children as they are not given that much independence similar to Mahmud.

Cultural knowledge is one of the factors, which is as important as the other factors. Children need to learn their culture side by side the language because culture is transmitted through the language. Not only culture, but also beliefs, conceptions, ideas are formatted in the language. Mahmud, Rihaan and Ananna attend some cultural and traditional programs held in different times. Mahmud's daycare also arranges programs in different days. Tasin has not gone to any cultural celebration yet as her mother did not take her. According to Parlakian and Sanchez (2006), culture is an important aspect in case of language learning. The cultural belief is installed in child by the adults and these beliefs have an effect on how the adults interact with the child. Therefore, attending such programs proves to be beneficial for the children.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 6.1 Conclusion:

The language acquisition process is a long term process which starts before the birth of a child and the development process continues to the adulthood of the person. Suitable environment, where level-appropriate stimulus are presented in an interactive way, the learning process will automatically become activated there. Besides, the children need proper attention and parental guidance for learning language and to produce the language successfully. The objective of the study was to find out the role of environment in case of language acquisition. Another objective was to find out the quality of input and interaction which helps the children in their language development. From all the data collected through interviews and observations, it can be said that the role of environment is the most significant for language learning of a child. The way environment affects a child's language acquisition process, no other aspect or innate ability can do that. The environment produces all the necessary elements which are required for smooth language acquisition of the children. Besides, parental guidance, both spouses' effort, caregivers and parents' participation with children in their regular activities, taking part in games with different children etc. provides them with the proper input and interaction they require to develop their acquired language. Moreover, different level-appropriate exposures to books, rhymes, cartoons, music help the children to expand their vocabularies and thus developing the language. Moreover, it has been found that presence of both parents is also an important factor for quick development of language. It is necessary to allow children a certain level of autonomy so that he can be self-dependent and thus understand self-reliance which will make him/her more confident and this confidence will assist in learning and development. All these necessary

elements are required to be present in the environment of the children. thus, their smooth language acquisition and development can be assured.

## **6.2 Recommendations:**

To make sure the children's environment is appropriate for their language acquisition and they are being provided with the best input and interaction, there are some recommendations:

- Children should be practicing different types of vocal exercises on a regular basis associated to the real life, such as- greetings practice, prosodic role play, counting in hide and seek etc. So that their cognitive skill and linguistic skill both get improved from the very early period.
- Children should be given time as much as possible by their parents, even if they are in their babbling stage because it will work as stimuli and help them when they are able to produce utterances.
- Children should be given freedom to some extent from the very early period, so that they can do some of their activities by themselves regularly. It will let them to have faith on them and thus they should be confident while producing utterances. It will be also taken care that freedom should be controlled.
- Different educational programs are available in our country, which are also enjoyable, such as "Sisimpur". Children should be getting exposed to such programs in their leisure time. Thus their language development will be fastening. They should be kept away from adult contains.

- They should be transmitted cultural knowledge from the very beginning of their life in order to introduce them with the traditional aspects. It will enhance their language capability and vocabulary collection.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Questionnaire for parents

Age (y/m/d):

Developmental stage/Cognitive stage:

Setting:

Parent's profession:

Please read the following questions properly and answer:

1. How old was your child when he/she first spoke a word? Give example.

---

2. How many hours do you spend with your child every day?

---

3. Do you involve yourself in your child's feeding, bathing, sleeping etc. activities?

---

4. How much supportive is your spouse in your child's language acquisition?

---

5. How does your child currently communicate (e.g. gesturing, pointing, facial expressions etc.)?

---



6. What are the sounds/words/chunks your child frequently utters?

---

7. How does your child respond when you ask him/her to say something with you (to imitate you)?

---

8. Does your child imitate gestures (e.g. waving bye-bye, point at the ball or something etc.)?

---

9. Does your child interact with other children (siblings, daycare, neighbours or babysitter) on a regular basis?

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10. What are the sources he/she is exposed to (E.g. television programs, videos, rhymes, advertisements etc.)?

---

11. Are there any specific show/music/rhymes your child fond of?

---

12. Does your child remember events from the past and response depending on it? (e.g. you forbid to do anything or disliked it and he/she does not attempt to do that again).

---

13. Do you think your child connects things in case of learning language? (e.g. Fishes live in water, therefore, crocodiles, snails, turtle etc are fish).

---

14. Mention your child's strength and weakness in case of acquisition of first language.

---

15. What was the role of innate ability of your child for language acquisition? (Innate ability is something which helps him/her to learn new things by him/herself without any exposure).

---

16. Which one is more responsible for your child's present linguistic ability- Environment and parents/caretakers' role or the innate ability of your child to learn language?

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17. Do you try giving your child the cultural exposure? (e.g. outing on 21st February, 26th March, book fair, visit to shaheed minar etc.)

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Thank you